



Exploration of the effect of product differentiation on the level of visitor loyalty in the Mojokerto Mountain Region

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ABSTRACT

Because there are so many tourist attractions in Mojokerto, there is even more rivalry amongst them. To remain in business, one must thus be able to retain consumers, which requires the implementation of an effective marketing plan. The objectives of this research are to investigate and evaluate the impact of product differentiation on customer satisfaction, the impact of product differentiation on customer loyalty, the impact of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty, and the indirect impact of product differentiation on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction in the Mojokerto mountain region of East Java. 110 visitors make up the study's sample. The study's method of sampling is incidental sampling. Utilizing questionnaires, data were gathered and verified for accuracy and consistency. SPSS Windows version 24 is utilized to perform linear regression analysis on the data provided in this study. Regression analysis findings indicated that the initial product differentiation significantly improved customer satisfaction. Second, client loyalty directly benefits from product differentiation. Third, there was a notable positive correlation between customer loyalty and satisfaction. Fourth, by a favorable indirect impact on customer satisfaction, product differentiation significantly increased customer loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traveler numbers in Indonesia, particularly in Mojokerto, are rising quickly in tandem with the increase of population density and the current wave of globalization. The competition amongst the many tourist attractions in Mojokerto is increasing due to their increased quantity. Therefore, in order to stay in business, we need to be able to retain consumers, which requires a solid marketing plan. Sustaining client loyalty is one of the best tactics to use in the fiercely competitive travel industry of today.

A company's capacity to stay in business depends greatly on its ability to retain customers. According to Rowley (2005), Soo Ho (2018) maintaining client loyalty is crucial for corporate profitability and competitive advantage. There are several reasons, according to Ganiyu et al (2012), why companies should make pursuing client loyalty a strategic objective. Customer loyalty has been the subject of several marketing research in the past few years (Andaleeb (2006); Ganiyu et al, (2012); Nicholson et al, 2008), (McMullan, 2006);(Rowley, 2006). Based on empirical research, one of the elements influencing customer loyalty is marketing, and for marketing to have a major impact, it has to play a mediating function between the two. These research (Solimun et al, 2018)((Asutay, M. and Othman, 2020); (Verma & Singh, 2017) examine how marketing affects customer loyalty and how customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in this relationship.

According to Triyandi (2014) research findings, consumer loyalty was significantly impacted by the differentiation approach. Then, according to (Marzuki et al 2018), differentiation plays a crucial role in offering clients additional value in exchange for their loyalty to the business. In a highly competitive business environment, (Mardalis, 2006) asserts that client loyalty is crucial for the long-term growth of the organization. As stated by (Kotler, 2016). building trusting, intimate connections with clients is the goal of every marketer and is frequently cited as the secret to long-term marketing success. An organization or business must use the proper marketing plan to impact consumer loyalty in order to gain their loyalty. As stated by (Kertajaya, 2011), According to Triyandi (2014) research findings, consumer loyalty was significantly impacted by the differentiation approach. Then, according to Marzuki et al (2018), differentiation plays a crucial role in offering clients additional value in exchange for their loyalty to the business. Mardalis (2006) asserts that in an environment of intense rivalry among businesses, client loyalty is crucial since it will The company's attempt to set itself apart from rivals in order to give customers the best value is known as differentiation. Product Differentiation Strategy helps businesses identify their own distinctiveness within the intended market. Because the product (goods or services) is distinctive, the corporation can draw in as many potential clients as possible. Typically, the target audience for this kind of approach is prospective buyers who do not give pricing first priority when making decisions. Customer satisfaction is another aspect of product difference that influences customer loyalty.

Client satisfaction, according to Zeithaml et al (2016), is a reaction or a reaction from a client on the fulfilling of demands. When a customer is satisfied with a product or service—or the product itself—it means that their demands are being met and they are experiencing a certain degree of happiness. The secret to fostering client loyalty is ensuring consumer happiness. Achieving a high degree of customer satisfaction has several advantages for the business, including boosting customer loyalty, lowering customer sensitivity to pricing, decreasing marketing failure costs, cutting operational expenses brought on by an increase in the clientele, improving advertising effectiveness, and enhancing brand recognition.

According to the above description, the study's formulation of the problem is how product differentiation affects customer satisfaction in the Mojokerto Mountain region of East Java's attractions and, if feasible, how that differentiation indirectly affects customer loyalty through customer satisfaction in the Mojokerto Mountain region of East Java's attractions. As of right now, this research can offer a respectable and helpful answer for the advancement of economics, particularly marketing management theory, as well as for practitioners.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

With the help of customer satisfaction surveys conducted in the Mojokerto mountain region of East Java, this study aims to test empirically the effects of product differentiation on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and customer satisfaction on loyalty, as well as the indirect effects of product differentiation on loyalty through surveys of customer satisfaction. According to Sugiyono (2014), this kind of research aims to identify and clarify the causal link between variables using explanatory analysis. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate hypotheses and provide answers to the challenges that have been stated. In this study, information was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires in order to address the formulation of problems, target goals and testable hypotheses derived from quantitative data gathered from measurement data.

The participants in this research are all visitors to the Mojokerto mountain region in East Java. The sampling strategy employed in this study is incidental sampling, which is applied to the whole population of all visitors between the ages of 14 and 60. Anybody who occurs to cross paths with a researcher can be utilized as a sample in accidental sampling, which is a chance-based strategy for determining sample size, provided that person is deemed acceptable to serve as a data source (Sugiyono, 2014). According to Augusty (2006), the number of multiplied indicators by five to ten determines the number of samples. The number of indicators in this study is multiplied to determine the sample size (11 indicators x 10 = 110). In order to conduct this study, 110 participants between the ages of 14 to 60 years old. Validity and reliability tests were conducted on the questionnaires used to collect data. Regression analysis is performed on the data using SPSS version 24 for Windows.

Table 1. Constructs Of Product Differentiation, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Constructs	Indicators	Reference
Product Differentiation	Feature	(Kotler, 2016)
	Performance	
	Suitability	
Customer Satisfaction	Reliability	(Zeithaml et al, 2016)
	Word of Communication	

Customer Loyalty	Personal needs	(Griffin, 2010) and (Purnama, 2015)
	Impression	
	Frequently making purchases	
	Not making purchases from outside the product or service range	
	Recommending to other people	
	Not easily impacted by how appealing rival offerings are	

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Validity of the question items used in the research's implementation is assessed using the validity test. Table 2 below displays the results of all study variables' validity tests.:

Table 2. Validity test of product differentiation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

Variable	Indicators	Corrected item-total correlation	Standard	Validation
Product Differentiation (X)	Feature	0.483	0.189	Valid
	Performance	0.709	0.189	Valid
	Suitability	0.801	0.189	Valid
	Reliability	0.715	0.189	Valid
Customer Satisfaction (Y1)	Word of Communication	0.903	0.189	Valid
	Personal needs	0.821	0.189	Valid
	Impression	0.896	0.189	Valid
	Repeated purchases	0.533	0.189	Valid
Customer Loyalty (Y2)	Not buying outside	0.412	0.189	Valid
	Recommend	0.688	0.189	Valid
	Not affected competitor	0.646	0.189	Valid

Source: Primary data processed.

The *r* table value, or 0.189, is compared with the verified total item correlation at a significance level of 5%. The instrument is deemed legitimate if the overall item correlation coefficient is verified at a value greater than 0.189. Every statement in the questionnaire is true, according to the validity test findings.

For each of the three variables, a reliability test using the Cronbach alpha coefficient was conducted. This is done in order to assess the test equipment' consistency. The values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient are discussed in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Reliability test of product differentiation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

Variables	Cronbach Alpha Value
Product Differentiation	0.606
Customer Satisfaction	0.844
Customer Loyalty	0.701

Source: Primary data processed.

Since all of the Cronbach's alpha values are more than 0.6, it is possible to infer that the instrument tests are reliable.

Regression Test Results

Table 4 below shows the outcomes of a statistical regression analysis conducted using SPSS version 24.0 to see how product differentiation affected customer satisfaction.

Table 4. Test Result Product Coefficient Product Differentiation on Customer Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.963	1.301		3.047	0.003
Product Diffrensiation	0.394	0.099	0.374	3.989	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Primary data processed.

The results of statistical analysis to test the effect of product differentiation and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty as Table 5 below:

Table 5. Anova Product Differentiation and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig
1	Regression	915.820	2	457.910	87.535	0.000(a)
	Residual	507.420	107	5.231		
	Total	1423.240	109			

a Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Product Diffrensiation, Customer Satisfaction

Source: Primary data processed.

Table 6. Test Result Product Difficulty and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

	Model	Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.902	0.938		2.027	0.045
	Product Diffrensiation	0.944	0.073	0.840	12.850	0.000
	Customer Satisfaction	0.131	0.070	0.132	2.877	0.044

a Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Source: Primary data processed.

Discussion

Impact of Product Uniqueness on Client Contentment

Table 3 supports the value testing hypothesis 1 for data processing, where t count on the count for the variable Product Differentiation = 0374. Although the significant value table (α) = 0.05, the Drajad freedom (Dk) = the quantity of data (n) - 2 = 110 - 2 = 108, tests carried out on both sides, resulting in a tabulated t table of = 1.661. Ho is rejected, indicating that the significant regression coefficient or product differentiation actually has a substantial impact on customer satisfaction, based on the computation of the count value > t table or 3.989 > 1.661 and 0,000 or the probability of sig is considerably below 0.05.

The findings of this study were compared to research by Wanda & Pangestuti (2018), who found that product differentiation increases visitor satisfaction due to unique features that offer visitors experiences and new information that they cannot get at other tourist destinations. Customers are satisfied as a result of product diversity, according to Li et al (2017). The study's findings, according to Tjiptono (2014), involved studies on how research destinations improve tourists' pleasure. According to Suwito (2018) research, there is a noteworthy correlation between product changes and consumer happiness. Similarly, (Ringelberg et al, (2018) stated that product differentiation was necessary to raise consumer happiness. Customer satisfaction will rise for products that differentiate themselves through novel market formats (Sadeli et al., 2016). As stated by Lin (2021). Price parity with rivals can be achieved through product differentiation. In today's competitive market, building a stronger brand equity is one of the key business strategies, according to Abd.Ghani (2017), as it may lead to advantages like competitive differentiation.

Impact of Customer Loyalty on Customer Satisfaction

The value of the second hypothesis, where t on the count for the variable customer satisfaction = 2,877, is based on Table 5's data processing findings. At a significant level of α = 0.05, DK (drajad freedom) = the number of data (n) - 2 = 110 - 2 = 108, tests carried out on both sides, resulting in a tabulated t table of = 1.661. The regression coefficient is significant or customer happiness has a substantial impact on customer loyalty if the count value > t table or 2,877 > 1,661 and sig 0,000 or the probability is far below 0.05 are calculated. If these results are obtained, Ho is rejected.

The findings support a research by (Jin et al (2012) that found a positive and substantial relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. When a consumer is loyal and makes repeat purchases, the degree of customer satisfaction stays the same. The findings of this investigation are consistent with those of Saleky (2017) and Pary (2017), who conducted an empirical study demonstrating the significant impact of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. Customer happiness is different, and in order to outperform its rivals, the business must work to produce exceptional products. According to Kotler (2012), the majority of research indicates that higher customer satisfaction levels are associated with stronger customer loyalty, which in turn leads to improved business success. Astute businesses want to please clients by merely making promises based on their capacity, then exceeding those promises. Customer satisfaction results in not only repeat business but also "reporters" who inform others about their positive product experiences.

Zeithaml et al (2016) proposed that, in addition to current consumers and rivals, a crucial and interdependent stage in realizing and sustaining customer loyalty is undertaking a company study encompassing past and non-customers. As a result, businesses are better able to comprehend the elements that contribute to client happiness and loyalty as well as the unfavorable elements that can

cause a consumer to leave. consumer loyalty is positively impacted by consumer satisfaction with product quality, as per Sadeli et al (2016). According to Kotler (2016), happy consumers tend to stick with a business longer, making repeat purchases when it releases new goods and upgrades existing ones, and talking to others about how great the business and its offerings are while paying little attention making suggestions for new goods or services to the business, being less price-sensitive than rivals, and having cheaper service costs than new clients due to the possibility of recurring transactions.

Impact of Product Uniqueness on Client Allegiance

The data processing hypothesis testing 3 value is shown in Table 5, where the t count for the variable product differentiation is 12 850 for the t count> t table = 12 850> 1,661. which considers the probability value of 0.000 or less in the sig column of the table. The regression coefficient is significant or the Product of Differentiation has a substantial direct influence on customer loyalty since the value of t count> t table or 12.850> 1.661, indicating that H_0 is rejected.

According to Marzuki et al (2018) differentiation affects consumer loyalty, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Differentiation plays a critical part in the business since it gives the company an advantage over rivals and is a long-term strategy that can maximize client loyalty. This study's findings, which indicate that differentiation methods have a major impact on customer loyalty, are consistent with those of Triyandi (2014). According to Nurzaini & Khasanah (2018), a strategy for effective differentiation has to be able to: (a) provide value for the consumer; (b) raise perceptions of distinctiveness and excellent value; and (c) manifest in diverse forms things are challenging to replicate. As a result, it may be concluded that creating a "point of differentiation", especially from the standpoint of the consumer, rather than from the perspective of company operations—is essential to developing effective differentiation strategies and retaining customers. The firm will make more money if its customers are loyal (Albalooshi et al (2017).

According to Kotler (2012) differentiation is the process of including a number of noteworthy differences to set a business apart from a competitor. According to (Qalby et al (2018) research, consumer loyalty is impacted by distinctiveness. Businesses must be able to increase their competitive edge by imaginative, inventive, and effective efforts in order to become the preferred option for a large number of consumers who are then expected to remain "loyal" to the company's products. According to Kasiri et al (2017), there is a noteworthy correlation between product differentiation and loyalty. Onojaefe & Nhepera (2017) discovered that innovation and product distinctiveness had a stronger impact on consumer loyalty. But not every product innovation and differentiation has the same degree of impact, because not every impact possesses statistical significance. The degree of impact, however, is shown to be an enabler that helps with customer loyalty and competitive strategy.

Product Differentiation's Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

The data processing testing hypothesis 4 in Table 4 indicates that the F test resulted in a F count of 87.535. Significant influence of product differentiation on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction is shown by a significant level of 0,000 for probability (0,000) much less than 0.05.

The findings of the investigation aligned with the findings of Simamora and Sinaga's (2016) study, which indicates that tourist destinations offer both artificial attractions like games and entertainment centers and natural attractions like the beauty and uniqueness of the surrounding environment, culture, and local community activities. The contentment of tourists throughout their stay will be satisfied if this component is met correctly, which will enhance the destination's reputation and lead to a rise in the number of visitors.

Karyono (1997) asserts that tourism attractions are connected to things to see and do. What is there for travelers to see and do there. Natural beauty and distinctiveness, regional culture, historical building legacy, and man-made attractions like amusement parks and games may all serve as sources of tourism appeal. A high differentiation rating indicates that an attraction is distinct and stands out from other areas or tourist spots. Customer loyalty and satisfaction have a positive and substantial value. Positive indicates that there will be an increase in the value of customer loyalty if the value of customer satisfaction rises, and considerably indicates that there is a considerable relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Previous research also comes to the same conclusion that a company's loyalty is directly impacted by customer pleasure (Normasari et al, 2013). Therefore, the results of this study and those of other investigations are same. In keeping study's with (Li et al (2017).

The findings indicate that: (1) a diverse range of products positively impacts consumer satisfaction; and (2) customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty. Third, a mediating function full of client loyalty is discovered to be played by customer satisfaction. Dwiyanana et al. (2015) claim that when consumers are happy with a product, they become loyal to it. This demonstrates that

tourists who visit tourist distillations are happy with their experiences, return, recommend the place to others, and say nice things about it. Visitors perceive this based on their enjoyment and sense of fulfillment from the tour; they are content with the availability of distinctive attractions or tourist attractions in the form of several facilities that are currently in place.

4. CONCLUSION

First, the test findings and regression analysis performed using SPSS 24.0 reveal that the Mojokerto mountain region in East Java has favorable effects on consumer satisfaction due to its unique product offerings. Second, patron loyalty at the Mojokerto Mountain region in East Java is positively impacted by customer satisfaction. Third, product differentiation has a direct beneficial impact on consumer loyalty at Mojokerto mountain region in East Java. Fourth, product differentiation at Mojokerto Mountain, East Java attractions indirectly improves customer happiness, and customer contentment at Mojokerto Mountain, East Java attractions positively affects customer loyalty. It is anticipated that the study's findings, particularly those concerning client loyalty, will add to the body of knowledge in marketing management theory. Furthermore, it is anticipated of the business to take into account the variables that may impact the rise in client loyalty. It can also be taken into account while deciding on corporate management guidelines. A suggestion for future research development is to analyze factors that may influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the mountainous region of Mojokerto. Consider expanding the scope of variables, such as cultural or environmental aspects, which may contribute to customer preferences and perceptions. Involving technology and innovation in marketing strategies and product development could be the focus of future research, as technological developments often have a significant impact on consumer behavior. An in-depth understanding of how technology trends can be integrated with the uniqueness of local products could help improve the competitiveness of businesses in the Gunung Mojokerto tourism area. Involving respondents from different walks of life and demographics may provide more comprehensive and representative insights related to consumer preferences in the region.

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